

Letter from Patrick Hanlon (TMM Pct 5) and Alham Saadat (TMM Pct 4) on Article 38 Capital Budget

May 1, 2023

Dear Colleagues

We are writing as town meeting members and as members of the Board of Directors of the Arlington Libraries Foundation in support of Article 38 (Capital Budget), and particularly three appropriations for library improvements totaling approximately \$277,000. These include \$ 53,803 for Minuteman Library Network equipment, \$77,000 to replace the Energy Management System at Robbins Library, and \$146,720 for the Robbins Library Lighting Project. The latter two investments will result in a greener and brighter Robbins as well as substantial operational savings down the road.

Arlington's libraries are an invaluable resource for community. They provide a complete and cost-free spectrum of information services to everyone, including programs for children, a vibrant teen center, electronic and audio books, space for English language learning and community events, access to computers and internet connectivity, and of course books on paper from their own collection and the Minuteman network. The libraries' circulation has completely rebounded from the pandemic and places them fourth in the entire Minuteman Network.

Just the same, our libraries are aging. The Fox Library, which was called out in the Town's 2019 ADA Self-Evaluation report as a town building offering no accessible route, has not been renovated since 1952. The Robbins Library was last renovated in 1994. In the meantime, circulation has grown, and community needs have evolved. New programs, like the Library of Things (which allow users to borrow everything from tents to induction stove tops) and makers' spaces, use space in different ways.

The Capital Planning Committee's report recognizes a long-term need for significant improvements to Robbins and replacement of the Fox in the latter part of this decade. To meet that need, however, the libraries will have to access funds from a variety of sources. The Town intends to apply for state funding, which could cover up to half the cost of replacing the Fox library, in May 2024.

One essential source of funds for our libraries is direct support from the community. The Arlington Libraries Foundation was established 10 years ago as the libraries' primary fundraising arm. The Foundation is looking forward to reaching out to the community, explaining our libraries' vision for the future, and raising funds from residents and others to keep our libraries strong and thriving.

Aware of the immediate and future needs outlined in the Capital Planning Committee's report, we are excited, as TMMs and as leaders of the Foundation, to join in the effort of keeping our libraries the crown jewels that they are by enthusiastically supporting Article 38.

Patrick Hanlon, TMM Precinct 5, Chair of Arlington Libraries Foundation

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Arlington Libraries Foundation